



## Not much for bush

WITH the announcement of last week's Federal Government's budget it failed to deliver any surprises or instil any confidence to the people of the Central Midlands and Mid West agricultural regions – there is nothing for us.

The Advocate invited comment from regular political contributors about their thoughts on the budget and how the region would or would not benefit from the budget announcements.

Those to reply were Agricultural Region MLC Brian Ellis and Federal MP Barry Haase.

Mr Ellis said farmers looking for relief would find the Government's budget a bit patchy like the drought.

"The fiscal predictions made in the budget were like rain clouds hanging promisingly over the horizon that can disappear with hardly a drop," Mr Ellis said.

"How can we believe in a government which promises a deficit next year, and hopes for a small surplus of \$1 billion the year after, when it hasn't been able to deliver on its previous promises such as the Emissions Trading Scheme, the disastrous insulation scheme and its mismanaged school improvement program?

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## Not much in the budget for the bush

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“Given that the insulation scheme alone will take \$439 million of taxpayer money to fix, can we trust the Government that there won’t be other botch-ups over the next two years that eat up the promised small surplus?”

“On this basis, can we trust the Government to successfully implement a national health scheme which is still an undelivered promise and was designed to deny WA its GST?”

“Can we trust the Government to deliver the promised surplus when it depends on a hotly disputed 40 per cent super tax on mining, which hasn’t even made it through the parliament?”

Mr Ellis said Mid West miners and local governments were rightly furious about the mining tax, and this had been a hot topic of discussion at a recent Mid West Hinterland Sustaining Communities workshop in Perenjori.

The agricultural sector is also badly served by the budget and according to the National Farmers Federation, R&D funding is at its lowest level in 30 years.

At a time when the grain rail issue is sensi-

tive in WA, the Government has allocated \$1 billion Australia-wide for freight rail, but WA will only get funding for one line between Koolyanobbing and Kalgoorlie.

Electricity upgrades for the Mid West have also been overlooked.

Mr Ellis said he welcomed the extra funding for training and would wait to see how this translated into WA rural scene.

He also welcomes the incentive funding for additional nurses in general practices, but the \$25,000 of allocated funds will only pay half the salary of a nurse and more money is needed for country practices.

Mr Ellis said that, at a time when depression and anxiety caused by drought was a real concern in the bush, it was disappointing to see that the funding for the Mental Health Support for Drought Affected Communities had only been extended for 12 months.

In a blow to farmers and communities which are endeavouring to adopt improved landcare practices, the Caring for Country program has lost \$81 million and on top of that Landcare has lost

\$10 million.

In comparison, the WA Government this week announced \$4.9 million to help local communities protect and improve their renewable natural resources.

Mr Ellis said he was relieved to see some Federal funding retained for live animal export welfare programs and weed and pest management.

However, he said that in general WA had been short-changed given that, with 10 per cent of Australia’s population, WA accounted for more than 40 per cent of the nation’s exports and 14 per cent of the national economy.

“What the Government is ‘promising’ is a deficit next year,” Mr Ellis said.

“What they are ‘hoping for’, if he doesn’t have any more disastrous blow-outs from mismanagement, is a small surplus the year after.

“In other words, we can expect the budget drought to continue for another 12 months and we can turn our eyes hopefully to the elusive clouds on the horizon two years from now.”

Federal MP Barry

Haase said the Government’s ‘great big new tax on mining’ must be stopped so families in Durack did not face higher electricity and grocery prices.

“Durack needs a government that is committed to paying off Labor’s \$93 billion of public debt, supporting families and securing jobs,” Mr Haase said.

“The Liberal Government will do this.

“They have delivered the biggest budget deficit on record of \$57 billion and it will now proceed to borrow \$700 million every week for three years.

“Opposition leader Tony Abbott announced a plan to put an end to the Government’s reckless spending and stop his great big new mining tax which threatens our economy and will send Australian jobs overseas.

“His budget reply outlined a better and more responsible way to manage the budget, and a way to return to surplus and pay off Labor’s debt.

“He also highlighted how a high-taxing, high-spending budget is a danger to the economy.”